

# ONYX

I N F O R M E R

The Black Student View at NU

December, 1987

## Our 'Tute'

*This is the first installment of a series of articles about the past, present and future of the African-American Institute.*

By Wayne Bryant

The years 1987-88 are destined to be landmark years for the African-American Institute. In addition to celebrating its 20th Anniversary, the AAI or the "tute" as many know it, is undergoing a transformation.

AAI has undergone many changes in the past quarter. The most notable is the change of directors. Dean Keith Motley has replaced Dr. John Norman as Director. Dean Motley was previously Dean of Minority Student Affairs and Dean Ella Robertson now holds that position. David Lawrence is now the Coordinator of Cultural, Academic and Social Activities for the Institute and Director of the Amil Cabral Center. He replaced Greg King.

Those are not the only changes. There are plans to create a recreational section and reopen the Cabral Center's kitchen.

The most important events will take place next June when we pay tribute to

those who made the Institute a reality. June 3-5 will be a weekend of celebration for founders, staff, faculty and students. Already planned are a concert and social gathering for June 4. The 20th Black Unity Awards Banquet is planned for June 5. Dean Motley said he would like to see students get involved in the planning of the celebration and asked students to call him at 437-3143 or just stop by the "tute."

The African-American Institute serves many purposes for the minority students at Northeastern. It provides tutorial services, has informational resources on the Afro-American race and serves as a social meeting place. The "Tute" also sponsors many events throughout the year, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation and Black Heritage Month Speakers. For these and many other reasons, the Institute remains an integral part of Northeastern and the black student body.

*Next Issue: How thought became a reality or "Back to the Past"*



The African American Institute on Leon Street. (Onyx File Photo)

## Trading Places:

## A conversation with Keith Motley and Ella Robertson

By Lisa Chapman McCoy

Keith Motley recently became Associate Dean and Director of the African American Institute and Ella Robertson became Acting Assistant Dean and Director of Minority Student Affairs. In separate interviews, they spoke with the ONYX about the African-American Institute, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, and black students at Northeastern University.

### KEITH MOTLEY

ONYX: What are your plans for the Institute?

KM: To put life back into the Institute by developing programs that allow students to participate in the development and implementation of programs. I'm going to revitalize the Cabral Center by bringing in things that are attractive to students, by making the Cabral Center into a recreational facility with such things as a pool table, table tennis, a television and video games. This will attract students to the center and make them want to come to the Institute. This will then allow the Cabral Center to become the 'lifeblood' of the Institute.

ONYX: Once the students return to the Institute, what will they find?

KM: They will find the type of support structure that they need to be successful on this campus. There will be a full staff ready to work with

them. They will find a library that will be the best resource for information on African-American history and culture. They will find a Reading and Study Skills Program that is second to none on this campus, a program that should be used as a model university-wide. They will find everything they need.

ONYX: 1988 marks the 20th anniversary of the Institute. Why is that so important?

KM: It's important because it honors those who had just an idea in 1968. The Afro-American Association had a concept of what they wanted the Institute to be. They drafted a proposal and presented a list of demands to the university administration. And after 20 years of ups and downs, the Institute is still here. I think it's really significant because after 20 years, given the size and location of the building in the past, the Institute is still here and still functioning. After 20 years, this place is poised for greatness.

ONYX: Having been a part of the Institute's history, as a student, what does it mean to you personally to now be director of the Institute?

KM: I never dreamed that I would be here. It's truly an honor. I always used to think about what I would do if...[I was director of the Institute]. Now I have a chance to do some of the things I always dreamed of doing. I take personal

pride in the legacy of the Institute, having been part of it. It's going to be a significant part of my life's work.

ONYX: How do students view the Institute?

KM: Students don't know how to view the Institute because they don't understand the history. We have dedicated 1988 to teaching that history. We will begin during Kwanza, teaching about Amilcar Cabral. We will have weekly sessions on the history of the Institute. All the students have to judge the Institute by what it was like when they came here. But the Institute is rich in history, and it has potential for greatness in the future. If we all work together, it can be what we talk about it being.

ONYX: Do you plan to continue the Director's Council?

KM: The Director's Council and the Office of Minority Student Affairs Student Advisory Board no longer exist as they once did. There will be the student advisory board to the Institute and the Office of Minority Student Affairs, a committee of the Northeastern Black Student Association (NBSA). They will work to produce such programs as the annual Oratory Competition, the Martin Luther King Convocation, the Black History Month Quiz Bowl, the Minority Student Affairs Open House, and the 20th Anniversary Celebration, which will be held on

June 3rd, 4th, and 5th.

ONYX: Are you planning any physical changes?

KM: The library will be renovated and an opening reception will be held on February 7. The back part of the Second Floor will be turned into classrooms. We're going to plant flowers outside to give the building a more appealing look.

### ELLA ROBERTSON

ONYX: In your opinion, what is the biggest problem facing black students today?

ER: Finding the money to pay for college is always a problem. With college costs rising, and loan and grant money decreasing, it's getting more difficult to pay for college. But I think one of the biggest problems facing black students today is that I don't think they have the drive that a lot of black students in the 60s and 70s had. They're a lot different than the people that came before them. A lot of black students go to college not knowing what they want to do, or what to major in. They don't seem to have the desire to get a degree. They take it for granted that they are

(Continued on page 2)

# Just My Opinion

We, meaning  
You, He and Me  
Attending a meeting  
Show your face **WHAT FLAIR**  
Do you participate there  
**DO YOU DARE**  
- Felicia G. Smith, Editor



F.G.S.

## Trading Places

(Continued from page 1)

even in college. They don't seem to be until they get into trouble.

ONYX: How is the Office of Minority Student Affairs helping these students?

ER: We have an academic warning and monitoring system so we can at least see where the student is going. It helps us find out if they really want to be here. If they ignore the warning and don't seek help, we know they really don't want to be here. By the end of the third quarter [of the freshman year], students come to me with a lot of excuses why they didn't seek help during the first quarter. With the support services for them here in Minority Student Affairs, there is no excuse.

ONYX: Is there a different type of black student coming to Northeastern?

ER: There is a different type of black student going to college in general. At Northeastern, we are seeking a wide range of black students from all socio-economic levels. We are seeing a lot of black students who are not aware of themselves and their culture. They don't know how to function in a predominantly white environment. They are told that if they go to college and work hard to get a degree, and get a good job, they will fit in. And in trying to do all that, they neglect their blackness. Many of them wouldn't even recognize a subtle racist remark or act if it hit them in their faces. Also, black students today are politically asleep. They are not concerned. They only wake up when it's too late. It's important for students to get involved in the African-American Institute. I was mentioning Kwanza to a few students, and they didn't even know what that was. Black students today don't seem to be in touch with reality and their relationship to the world.

ONYX: Has the role of the Office of Minority Student Affairs changed over the years?

ER: Traditionally, the office has monitored the academic progress of blacks in the freshman class. But as the administration of the office

changed and the role of the office has changed. The office has developed retention programs to help students stay and successfully matriculate and has begun to address development issues through various seminars and workshops.

ONYX: Do you feel that being a Northeastern alumnus helps you in your job?

ER: Definitely. The University as a whole still operates the same as it did when I was a student, so when students come to me with a problem, I can relate. On the other hand, it also helps because I can't be manipulated about how hard it is here, because I've been through it. Students can't tell me anything I haven't experienced myself. It was struggle for me to get my degree, so I take a personal interest in seeing black students get their degrees.

ONYX: What role do students play in the Office of Minority Student Affairs?

ER: Students should be actively involved in the Northeastern Black Students Association. Historically, it has been the organization to bring the problems of the black students to the administration. It's important for students to know what the issues are and the impact it has on them, so they should be involved in the NBSA. And involvement in the NBSA gives the students a role in both Office of Minority Student Affairs and the African-American Institute because these are the mechanisms that address issues of black students.

ONYX: Do you plan to make any changes?

ER: The office works based on the temperament of the students. We look at what the students' needs are and the office tries to address these needs programatically. Every summer, we look at the freshman class that just completed their first year and see what they needed. We then develop programs to address these needs for future classes. There won't be any major changes, but changes will be made to address the needs of the incoming freshman class.

## Learn about U

*"Education is more than the mere imparting of information. Above all things the effort must result in making one think and do for oneself. The only way one can function efficiently in society is to know oneself. In studying the records of others one becomes better acquainted with oneself and with one's possibilities to live and do in the present age."*

G. Woodson, 1933

Carter

By Valencia Z.H. Hughes

In studying the records of others one becomes better acquainted with oneself. In this one statement Woodson sums up exactly what Afro-American Studies is all about. When you study the history of another people and get to know and understand their struggle, you become better equipped to deal with them in your day to day experience. This not

only stands true for learning about Afro-American culture, but can be applied to any culture. The more we know about those that we interact with on a day to day basis, the less likely we are to pre-judge them. And the more likely we are to try and understand them.

Not only does it benefit your relationship with others to study their cultures, but it also benefits your relationship with yourself and your people. When you study the culture of others you, in turn, learn about yourself, and your people. You can see how your ancestors interacted with different cultures and discover the effects it had on your people. You get to take a look at how you view the world. Take a chance on learning something new. Take a course in Afro-American Studies. Broaden your horizons, learn about someone else and learn about yourself.

## The Onyx

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The Onyx-Informer is a student publication serving the black community at Northeastern University. Its office is located in 449 Ell Center, 360 Huntington Ave. Boston, Mass. 02115. Staff meetings are held on Thursdays at 6 p.m. Contributions are welcome and may be submitted to the editor at the address above. All interested students can join the Onyx and attend meetings. Typography and production for this issue of the Onyx were done by David Kitter.



## Giving back... Lawrence stays at NU

This is the first in a series of articles about black alumni at Northeastern University. These articles will tell you what they are doing now and their accomplishments and give you some insight on how they made it through the tough Northeastern process.

By Garfield Wellington

David "Spoon" Lawrence graduated from Northeastern University with a degree in health education this past September. Originally from Baltimore, he claims he has no regrets about attending Northeastern.

"I have a lot of fond memories of Northeastern," he said, while sitting in his new office in the Afro-American Institute. "The best memory, of course, was graduation day. But I also fondly remember going to the NCAA's four straight years, receiving the positive force awards in 1987, taking second place in the 1983 Greek step show and all the other good times I had at Northeastern."

Lawrence recently accepted the position of Coordinator of Cultural, Academic and Social Activities of the African-American Institute, a position vacated by Greg King. Although

Lawrence initially contemplated taking a position with a pharmaceutical firm after graduation, he decided to take the job at the Institute because he felt a need to give something back to the community from which he had taken so much.

While attending Northeastern, Lawrence took an active role in many aspects of Northeastern's environment. He was the head manager of the basketball team for five years, a Resident Assistant at White Hall, a senator in the Student Government, a member of the Minority Student Advisory Board, a member of the Director's Council, President of the Omicron Chapter of Iota Phi Theta for two years and placed third in the oratory competition in 1987.

Although Lawrence said he has not encountered many racial conflicts during his years at Northeastern, he did mention a racial situation a couple of years ago.

"When I was an R.A. at White Hall I had a problem with a white student who was being disruptive," he said. "After I told him several times to quiet down, he called me a 'nigger.' I handled it in an administrative fashion. I reprimanded him and then I wrote him up but I did not physically



David Lawrence

(Onyx Photo by Felicia Smith)

go after him. I decided he was not worth it."

In his new job of coordinator of activities at the Institute, he expects to fuel new enthusiasm in the institution.

"My job will be to make the Institute more accessible," Lawrence said. "My job is to be a catalyst of interest in the institute and motivate the students towards the Institute."

He plans to do this by offering new and interesting programs to perk student interest.

He encourages all students to get involved in the activities provided for them. In order to keep the programs for black students which the university has, it is up to the students to take interest and get involved. His

advice to current undergraduates is "first, stay on top of your academics. Then network yourself and become involved in different activities. Also be confident, know yourself, be persistent and do not quit. There is nothing you cannot do it try hard enough."

David Lawrence has been a positive force at Northeastern and will continue to be a positive person wherever he goes. He has accomplished his goal of graduating and now has set new goals. Judging from his past record it is only a matter of time before he achieves these new goals.

## The origin and meanings behind Kwanza

By Valencia Z. H. Hughes

Kwanza was recreated by Maulana Karenga for the African Community's use in the late 1960s. Kwanza means "First," or rather in the case of the African Celebration, it represents the "First Fruits." Kwanza is a celebration of the harvesting of the first crop which was a tradition of our African people. They would bring what they had grown, or made to contribute to the Karamu (feast). They came together to rejoice, give thanks, and enjoy the blessing of life, and collective work for the community.

Kwanza has four symbols: Miko, Kinara, Mshumaa and Muhindi.

Miko is a straw mat that is placed on the floor or a low table, and all other items are placed on it. It symbolizes tradition as the foundation upon which everything else lies.

Kinara is a candle holder that supports seven candles. It represents the original stalk from which all life sprang. It is traditionally said that the first-born was like a stalk of corn that gave off corn which in

turn became a stalk that gave off more corn in the same manner. That showed that there is no end to us.

Mshumaa are the seven candles that are placed in the Kinara. They represent the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba) on which the first-born set up society in order that our people get the maximum from it. The seven principles are:

- Umoja (unity). To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

- Kujichagulia (self determination). To define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined and spoken for by others.

- Ujima (collective work and responsibility). To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together.

- Ujamaa (cooperative economics). To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.

- Nia (purpose). To make as our collective vocation, the building and

developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

- Kuumba (creativity). To do always as much as we can, in the way we can in order to leave out community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

- Imani (faith). To believe with all our heart in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Muhindi is the ear of corn which represents the offspring of the stalk. It also symbolizes the potential of the offspring to become the stalk also, and produce offspring. This process insures the immortality of the Nation.

The way to decorate for, and celebrate Kwanza. First, approximately a week before December 26, the beginning of Kwanza, decorations should be arranged and put up using a red, black and green color scheme. The red represents the blood of our ancestors which was not shed in vain. The black represents our faces and the labor we must do. The represents the land, the young, and

new ideas.

The main table has a center piece of a straw basket filled with tropical fruits and vegetables. The Mkeke is placed on the floor or a low table, and other items are placed on top of it. After placing the Mkeke, the Kinara is placed on its center and Muhindi ears are placed on its sides. Then place the Mshumaa in the Kinara. At dinner, the Kinara should be brought to the table each day, for seven days, one Mshumaa should be lit and a child should explain, as far as he or she understands, which principle it corresponds to. Each night, after dinner, the Kinara should be replaced on the Mkeke and the Mshumaa should be blown out until the following night.

On the seventh day, January 1, the day of Kwanza, the Zawadi, by Karenga, should be opened and read from. A large dinner is to be prepared and the final principle is to be explained, and discussed, and all the candles are to be lit. The children's commitments for the new year are heard and every one feasts and rejoices.

## Life Away From Home: A Graduate student's viewpoint

The Onyx met with Lora Dean Routt at her job in the African American Studies Office. Ms. Routt is a first-year graduate student. This is her first year in Boston. This is what "life away from home" means to Routt. She was interviewed by Valencia Z. H. Hughes.

Q. Can you remember when you first left home, going to college, what the experience was like for you?

A. It was great, getting away from home. Being on your own and being able to do what you wanted.

Q. What did you find the most difficult to deal with?

A. Being away from home on the holidays. Homesickness. Missing the familiar surroundings and old friends. Getting used to the new city.

Q. Did you find that being away from home got easier or more difficult?

A. It got easier because I made new friends. I got into a new routine and I got used to a new lifestyle.

Q. How has being away from home changed you? Has it helped you grow?

A. Yes, I've become more responsible for my actions. I can't depend on anyone but myself and I had to grow up fast.

Q. How would you describe life away from home?

A. There are pros and cons. The good: It's great. I've become independent and mature. I have a wide circle of friends. I've had new experiences being on my own and taking care of myself. The bad: I miss my family and old friends. I can't be lazy anymore. Sometimes it's hard to readjust. Sometimes my long distance phone bills are outrageous.

Join the Onyx!  
Get involved!!  
Contact Felicia:  
247-3982  
or Wayne  
437-3591



## An Apology

The following was written by 100 Black Men of Rutgers University and submitted to the Onyx by Gwen Webb.

The Brothers of 100 Black Men of Rutgers University are fully aware of the oppression that we, Black People, face in this society. Moreover, we do not romanticize the fact that this pressure has torn the Black Family Structure asunder leaving in its wake the residue of what a real Black Man and a real Black Woman ought to be. As a result, Black Men fight Black Men and Black Women fight Black Women, Black Women fight Black Men, and Black Women fight Black Women, thereby aiding in the destruction of ourselves. We say enough is enough. The Black Family must be reunited, preserved, and empowered if we are to move forward as a people. Therefore in the interest of developing unity we ask that...

... Black Women, please forgive us...

...For disrespecting the womb from which we came; for not appreciating our first teacher who is God's representative to us; for always crying out and ignoring your pain; for not being there when you struggled with the little ones; for hiding our weaknesses with brute force because you put us in our place; for telling you we loved you only to go on to another bed; for dropping deposits in you and not having the courage to watch the seeds grow; for drinking and smoking and wondering why you call us "no-good"; for looking at you as a physical entity and not recognizing the essence of your soul; for running to white women or each other because we fear your strength; for being destructive and not leaving or building anything for our children; for being any- and everything but men but thinking we are...

Forgive us, Black Women, for not being respectful, responsible, upright, dignified, spiritual, and loving to you, our Black Queens...

Please forgive us, Black Women, so we can one day march forward, together, forever into the Eternal Kingdom...

## NU goes to Howard

By Denise Skipper

A busload of Northeastern University students joined black students from Wellesley College and Tufts University on Oct. 22 to attend a three-day UNITY Conference at Howard University in Washington D.C.

At the conference, there were student workshops. Two that really got my attention were on AIDS and blacks, and on black relationships. The workshops were very well organized and unexpectedly interesting.

On Oct. 23, Minister Louis Farrakhan was the main attraction. Students asked Minister Farrakhan was asked to speak about how to get power in the 21st Century. Farrakhan believes that, in order for blacks to get power in the 21st Century, we must find out who the enemy really is. He said that "the enemy is deeper than color." His theory is that if we cannot get control of ourselves, we will not get control of anything. In other words "we have to work on self-improvement first and then take on everyone else."

He spoke for approximately an hour and a half. He kept the crowd interested and received three standing ovations during his speech. All in all, the Second Annual National Black Student Unity Conference was a great success.



## Knowledge is power

By Valencia Z. H. Hughes

You cannot lie to a man about his past, if he knows his past. You cannot bind a man in confusion if he has been freed by understanding. You cannot pin a man down by fear if he knows that there is nothing to fear but fear itself.

Brothers and sisters of all races I put before you the question asked: Knowledge. I present him to you as the question asker because if you know him you can answer his question, and if you don't know him, you better listen up so that you can find out how to answer his questions.

Knowledge asks the questions will you succeed, or will you fail? Knowledge asks the questions do you know where you've been, where you are, and where you are going? Knowledge asks the questions do you know who you and your people are?

Knowledge being the question asker today, wants you to offer your input. He wants to know why you sit there mute today. Because he noticed you at the party last Thursday night, "shoutin'" louder than anyone else. He wants you to know why you aren't "down" to go to classes, like you were "down" to go to that party? He wants to know why you don't have your life together in all aspects.

Knowledge is getting weary waiting for your answers. He

cannot hear you, and time is growing short. So knowledge will present to you the way in which you can find the answer to these questions. And many others like these that you will surely face. He will sight that great book, the Holy Bible. In 2 Timothy 2:15 it says: Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Knowledge says if we study our text books, reading materials, and make use of all available resources, as well as the Holy Bible we will be able to answer these questions, and many others. Not only must we study, but we must understand what we are studying. We must get ourselves together. We must establish goals for ourselves. Then we must find the path that leads us to those goals.

Knowledge offers to us another suggestion. He says that we must come together and help lift one another up. If you know a brother or sister that doesn't understand what's going on, don't talk him or her down. Help them to understand and then build them up. If no one can depend on your help, whose help will you be able to depend on in your time of need?

Knowledge says to us today that we must come together and find the path that leads towards getting our lives together in all aspects. He says you can find this path through getting to know him. For knowledge is power - knowledge is freedom!

## Celebrate Kwanza

## Black pharmacy students

By Melanie Liptrot

In the graduating class of 1992, there will be seven pharmacists, hopefully. My research began in the Office of Admissions, I wanted to know how many black students applied, how many were accepted, if the university was recruiting and, if so, what type.

Since the Office of Admissions, the Registrar's Office and the Office of Minority Student Affairs has no information to offer, it is obvious that no one has a great concern for this matter. But a question still remains: Why are there so few black pharmacy majors? Is it that many students are unaware of the field of pharmacy? Is it that many students feel that they don't have the strong academic background to pursue this field or do they feel that they couldn't survive the five years of full force studying? It's been said many times by faculty and upperclassmen that pharmacy is definitely a hard major and that all time must be directed toward school work, to succeed.

I must admit that, during freshman orientation, I was disappointed when I realized that I was one of only seven black students majoring in pharmacy. Personally, I had never considered the field of pharmacy until a recruiting officer from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy stopped me at a college fair and informed me of the benefits offered in the field, the education requirements, and the average starting salary. I began to look into the field of pharmacy and I search for an accredited college. Very few schools have a pharmacy program so I began to look for schools closer to my home with excellent reputations. Northeastern fit all my qualifications and also had a co-op program.

I was the only graduate of my high school who planned to become a pharmacist except for a close friend who also chose the career after she learned about. Pharmacy is an excellent field, but it takes a lot of determination and self-discipline, which most freshmen do not have when leaving home for the first time.

## Northeastern University African American Institute Calendar of Events

Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation  
11:45 p.m.  
Jan. 14, 1988  
Alumni Auditorium

Library Reception for Reopening  
6 p.m.  
Feb. 7, 1988

### BLACK HERITAGE MONTH AND 20th ANNIVERSARY

Black Heritage Month  
Major Speaker  
7 p.m.  
Feb. 8, 1988  
Alumni Auditorium

Roland E. Latham  
Oratory Competition  
7 p.m.  
Feb. 16, 1988

Black Heritage Quiz Bowl  
7 p.m.  
Feb. 22 and 25  
AAI Amilcar  
Cabral Center

20th Anniversary Weekend  
Time and place to be announced  
June 3-5, 1988